

**ieaa**

International Education  
Association of Australia



# **international student employability**

A GUIDE FOR  
AUSTRALIAN  
EDUCATION  
PROVIDERS

Second Edition

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## COVID-19

IEAA acknowledges the significant challenges faced by universities, industry, students, graduates, and careers professionals as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This guide was written during early 2020 at a time of significant disruption, with long term impacts still unknown. Undoubtedly, the global pandemic will disrupt society and the economy for years to come, with the importance of enhancing employability being undiminished and likely heightened. Students will be entering a more challenging employment landscape, with the need for innovation, creativity, and growth mindsets even more necessary. Leveraging promising practice from on and offshore institutions, and implementing focused initiatives like those featured in this guide, will enable our industry to face the new normal with informed perspectives. It is unlikely that we will return to the way things were, so let us consider how we can be better.

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## Introduction

The employability of international graduates is both a key priority and a continued challenge for education providers around the world. Enhanced employability is more important to students and industry employers than ever before. In recent years industry stakeholders have been increasingly focused on the skills development and employability of international graduates in Australia. Similarly, international students (and their parents) are looking to access experiences and develop capabilities that will enhance their career prospects, either in the Australian labour market, their home country or another country.

Above all, international students are seeking educational opportunities that provide a point of differentiation in a highly competitive global labour market (Blackmore et al, 2014; Lawson, 2014). With students increasingly choosing study destinations with employment outcomes in mind, institutions are more consciously developing their students' employability through a variety of programs and experiences, including work integrated learning (WIL), work experience and other experiential learning opportunities. Such learning experiences are becoming more central in enhancing student satisfaction, which in turn attracts more high-quality students.

Employability has also been a key priority for Australian governments, with local, state and Commonwealth agencies developing strategies and investing heavily in enhancing employment outcomes (Austrade, 2019). The Australian Government has invested in Enabling Growth and Innovation (EGI) grants focussed on employability and has linked Performance-Based Funding directly to domestic student satisfaction, success, access to education, and employment outcomes (Wellings, et al., 2019).

International students are seeking educational opportunities that provide a point of differentiation in a highly competitive global labour market.

Blackmore et al, 2014; Lawson, 2014



## A case for continued investment and innovation

Yet, despite this high level of interest, and Australian graduates having quite good career prospects (QILT 2019), student satisfaction data consistently shows a gap between employment outcomes and student expectations (Berquist, B., et al, 2019).

Competitor destinations are continuously gaining ground. New Zealand, Canada and even the UK are working hard to capture and grow their market share of students by offering new programs aimed at enhancing employability through building entrepreneurial mindsets and capabilities including creativity and problem solving.

## Employability is critical to the future success of students and the sector

A 2017 survey of international graduates found that only 40 per cent reported using their university career services (AUIDF, 2017). With increased demand for WIL and other work based learning opportunities among both international and domestic cohorts, institutions are developing strategies to scale up WIL programs, enhance industry partnerships, create greater opportunities to participate, and prepare international students to make the most of these experiences.

## Turning barriers into benefits

As the world of work continues to evolve, international students often need to develop a range of capabilities in order to be work-ready upon graduation. This can be a challenge since many students under-value the importance of experiential learning and the self-reflection required to realise the value of these experiences, focusing instead on acquiring technical skills and achieving high grades. International students may need assistance recognising the need to engage in a range of experiences to develop capabilities in high demand by industry.

Facilitating industry awareness and government collaboration are important dimensions of the broader employability conversation.

They also require support to navigate the job application process, understanding Australian workplace culture, and develop networks. Perceptions of poor English language proficiency of international students can be a barrier to employment. Similarly, employers are often unaware of the value that international students can bring to their businesses. Facilitating industry awareness and government collaboration are important dimensions of the broader employability conversation.

IEAA has sought to address these issues by producing the Broadening our Horizons campaign (<https://broadenourhorizons.com.au/>), where you will find a set of resources to assist education providers in communicating the benefits of international education to employers and the community. IEAA also published a report into the economic opportunities and outcomes of post-study work rights that includes some important insights about the factors that influence employment outcomes for recent international graduates (Chew, 2019).

## How to use this guide

This guide sets out best practice principles to assist institutions in preparing international students for success in a dynamic and competitive graduate labour market.

We show how Australian institutions can enhance the employability of international students and provide case studies that provide examples that can be applied to your workplace.



# Good Practice Principle

## 1. Treat international graduate employability as core business

In the past, careers and employability services have been treated as peripheral to the core business of educational institutions. This needs to change. In order to remain competitive, enhancing the employability of international students must be a key priority of all Australian institutions who are engaged in international education.

Ideally, a member of the institutional executive should take responsibility for developing and advancing the student employability agenda. While most institutions have made student employability a focus of their strategic plans, strong leadership or a 'champion' is required in order to convert good intentions into real outcomes for students.

The specific needs of international students must be recognised in any institutional strategy. However, across most Australian education providers, student marketing and recruitment, international student services, careers services and alumni relations all have distinct agendas that do not intersect neatly. To garner real action on this issue, employability indicators should be included in the KPIs of senior administrative and academic staff across a variety of divisions and pillars of institutional structures.

Careers and employability services face growing demands for their expertise from an increasingly diverse student population. Staff who work in this area have a vast portfolio of responsibilities, ranging from managing curricular and extracurricular internship programs (local and overseas), industry and government engagement (local and overseas), volunteering and mentoring programs (often including alumni and industry mentoring), entrepreneurial initiatives, as well as facilitating learning and development workshops (for staff and students). The inclusion of staff who are able to both work with international students and industry (onshore and offshore) is vital and institutional leadership must recognise that international students face distinct challenges and require additional support to overcome barriers to graduate employment.

In order to remain competitive, enhancing the employability of international students must be a key priority of all Australian institutions who are engaged in international education.



## Case Study

### WIL Central, University of New South Wales

UNSW Sydney has made a concerted investment in creating the academic structures, industry partnerships, and coursework opportunities for local and international students to gain real-world experience as an essential feature of the UNSW Scientia Educational Experience.

In 2019, UNSW Sydney introduced the UNSW3+ academic calendar to enhance flexibility and opportunities available to students throughout the year. UNSW3+ comprises three main teaching terms plus an elective summer term, which enables students to spread their studies across the year to balance Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and other activities that elevate the student experience.

As part of UNSW's Strategy 2025, WIL Central was established within the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) to drive improvements to the quality and scale of WIL across UNSW. A flagship initiative of WIL Central offered within UNSW3+ is the UNSW WIL Experience Term. As part of UNSW's longstanding 'General Education' – which is a pool of courses made available to students in most coursework degree programs – the WIL Experience Term enables students to spend an entire term undertaking a WIL placement or project for credit as part of the curriculum, either locally or overseas.

Before engaging with their respective partner organisation, students participate in mandatory workshops to develop their teamwork and project management skills, as well as their understanding of workplace expectations. The WIL Experience Term is a cornerstone of UNSW's international student employability strategy because it brings an activity – learning in the workplace – that usually occurs at the margins of students' time to the centre of their study experience.



Further information can be found at:  
<https://www.wil.unsw.edu.au/>





## Case Study

### Job Smart, University of Sydney Business School

*Job Smart is The University of Sydney Business School's flagship employability program specifically designed for, and delivered to, its international student cohort.*

Participants build key capabilities relevant for any global graduate recruitment market. It is a scaffolded set of co-curricular blended learning experiences that build professional skills and connections among students with industry and alumni. Students in the program progress through three phases, with a reward system offering key employability opportunities to high-performing students.

**Phase 1: Job Start** – A series of blended activities to discover what employers look for in hiring and engagement via several in Sydney-based community events

**Phase 2: Job Smart** – A simulated, online/face-to-face, branched team-based case study based on selected graduate attributes (resilience, influence or cultural competency)

**Phase 3: Job Ready** – A set of online coaching activities that mirror content and performance expectations of global graduate recruitment processes

*Job Smart is a large-scale ongoing student experience program, with roughly 8000 international students having participated since its launch in 2016. Delivering at scale is achieved by offering the program on a custom-built experiential learning digital platform. Participants complete tasks and activities, register for events and review feedback on a computer or mobile device. Fun gamification elements create “sticky” user engagement, differentiating it from students' formal learning environments.*

The program has proven highly effective, with 41% of students who complete all three phases of the program having jobs at graduation, as opposed to 14% of non-participating international students.



Further information on JobSmart can be found at: <https://sydney.edu.au/business/study/careers-and-employability/job-smart.html>

## Case Study

### ProsPER, StudyPerth

Launched by StudyPerth in 2020, ProsPER is an online portal that equips and empowers international students to develop the skills, experience, networks, confidence and knowledge needed to prosper in their lives.

StudyPerth is working with four leading employability solution providers to create a platform that addresses the specific challenges faced by international students in enhancing their employability in a global marketplace.

ProsPER was developed to create opportunities for every international student in WA, irrespective of their level of study, institution, course and location. The online portal spans the entire student lifecycle, starting at pre-application to ensure that the student embarks on the right path, right through to post-study to assist students in entering the workforce.

StudyPerth ProsPER is a single, purpose-built platform that integrates four specialist service providers. It is a gamified portal and modules are predominately self-guided. Upon signing up, the student answers a variety of onboarding questions which will then recommend the most appropriate model for where they are at in their student journey. Secondary school students and others who are yet to apply to university are prompted to complete the Career Personality Questionnaire. Students who have applied for tertiary study are prompted to complete a Virtual Internship Experience in STEM, health, business or a generic career search. At the same stage, students are encouraged to join the Buddy Program where they can connect with a mentor to help orientate them to life in Perth.

Once an offer has been made, the Welcome to Perth program is unlocked and students are able to commence planning their arrival and are encouraged to become engaged with the city. Current students and recent graduates are encouraged to join the Preparation for Internship or Job Readiness programs. These activities are designed to prepare the student for entering the Australian workforce and are also accessible in earlier stages which will assist in finding part-time employment while studying.

Across the lifecycle for all current students and alumni, participants are encouraged to upload their skills and experiences into the Global Skills Passport. This allows students to create a unique portfolio of employability and to reflect on what they have learned and empower them with the confidence to enter the job market. ProsPER is designed to complement the skills, knowledge and experience students gain from their studies and their education institution, including that gained through Work Integrated Learning.



Further information on ProsPER can be found at: [www.prosper.studyperth.com.au](http://www.prosper.studyperth.com.au)



## 2. Ensure pre-arrival information supports realistic employment expectations

Managing student expectations is critical. In order to minimise the mismatch in expectations and experiences, clear and accurate pre-entry information is essential.

Pre-arrival information should include details about features of the program that are designed to enhance employability, as well as optional activities students can undertake to develop their employability further. Institutions can at this point begin to empower students to be proactive, encouraging them to seek out experiential learning opportunities and following through on advice provided by careers and employability staff, and emphasising that students are also responsible for investing time and effort in their employability development.

Institutions must be careful not to over-promise work opportunities available while studying or after graduation.

While students can enhance their employability by engaging in a range of experiential learning opportunities, employment outcomes are not guaranteed. Institutions must be careful not to over-promise work opportunities available while studying or after graduation.

In terms of delivery of pre-arrival information, consideration should be given to a range of forms, including online, education fairs, alumni networks, prospectus/brochures. Careers advisors and WIL specialists can be engaged to more accurately inform education agents, parents and prospective students through all these channels. Utilising the voices of current international students and alumni to share their stories of studying and working in Australia is likely to have maximum impact, as will providing case studies of recent international graduates.

Finally, employability should feature prominently in orientation programs to ensure students begin their Australian experience well prepared to access resources and experiential learning opportunities early in their studies.





## Case Study

### Job Readiness Program, TAFE Queensland

TAFE Queensland International sought to develop a wider range of job readiness initiatives at pre-departure and arrival phases to improve the international student experience.

The TAFE Queensland student cohort is one of the most diverse in Australia with over 90 countries represented. TAFE Queensland International engaged Successful Graduate to create an extension of their Job Readiness Program to provide prospective international students with an opportunity to learn more about part time work in Australia, internship preparation and the development of job application skills. This skills development and employability initiative helped TAFE Queensland win the International Training Provider of the Year in the 2019 Australian Training Awards.

International students at Certificate, Diploma and Degree levels at TAFE Queensland have completed Successful Graduate training. The content has been prepared with simple English, allowing AMEP / ELICOS students to also enrol, thus broadening the range of participating student cohorts. Student satisfaction with the Successful Graduate training sits above 98%, demonstrating the importance of relevant and easily accessible online materials for students as they begin their international student journey.



A summary video of the Job Readiness Program can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/377013188>



Further information can be found at:  
[www.tafeqld.successfulgraduate.com](http://www.tafeqld.successfulgraduate.com)



## Case Study

### Future Course and Career Matching, EU Business School and MyCareerMatch

EU Business School has campuses in Barcelona, Geneva, Montreux, Munich and online, offering business education programs taught in English, including Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degree programs in Business Administration.

EU established a program to assist future students choose a business course that matched their talents, provide insights for their future, and allow EU to increase business school enrolment. MyCareerMatch provided a fit-for-purpose solution.

There has been considerable research indicating that the closer students matched their personal strengths to undergraduate courses the more likely they are to complete their studies, graduate on time and enjoy greater success in their chosen field.

MyCareerMatch analyses student responses to a survey and matches these against the study courses offered by EU Business School. The resulting personal profile suggests courses for the student to consider and lists occupations that graduates of these courses can pursue a career in.

This positive reinforcement lifts performance as students are more focused on the future and clearer about what they might be doing after graduating. The importance of this type of motivation cannot be overstated in a competitive and stressful environment where students often chop and change courses. EU offers the program free to students via social media, website, database, enquires and feeder schools and country agents.



Further information on this initiative can be found at: <https://mycareercoarse.co.uk/euruni/>





### 3. Embed employability holistically into the student experience

#### Supporting employability at institution level

Commencing students are often unaware of the importance of proactively developing their employability during study, and tend not to recognise the value of developing core transferable capabilities until it is too late. Strategies to ensure international students recognise the importance of employability early in their studies can help them to develop an action plan to engage in experiential learning opportunities to develop their knowledge, capabilities, and mindsets.

All students can be supported to develop their employability through broadening their understanding of their student experience, so that they are aware of the relationship between curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities. They should be encouraged to engage in a wide range of employability enhancing activities as well as those provided in their specific discipline. This is especially relevant for international students who often require additional support in developing interpersonal capabilities such as language proficiency, network creation, and access to experiences (Berquist et al., 2019).

A solution that has proven successful is for careers and employability staff to provide mandatory workshops for all first-year students that highlight the importance of engaging early with employability development and career planning. The workshops should send international students the message that the institution values employability, that success in the job market hinges on developing employability, and that the acquisition of career capital must take place through experiential learning throughout the student experience and beyond.

Strategies to ensure international students recognise the importance of employability early in their studies can help them to develop an action plan to engage in experiential learning opportunities to develop their knowledge, capabilities, and mindsets.



Once students are established in their studies, programs that provide a framework to develop employability in tandem with their core studies have many advantages. There is growing interest in the 'career portfolio' approach that encourages students to acquire and develop competencies, mindsets, and attributes throughout their student experience. These may include work experience, volunteering, extra-curricular activities, part-time jobs, resume writing, interview practice, employer engagement, joining professional associations, or participating in a global mobility experience. Upon graduation, the student will be able to draw on their career portfolio when seeking employment opportunities.

## Supporting employability at discipline level

Employability should also be addressed at the discipline level so that students learn how their experiences, knowledge, and attributes translate into their chosen field. Many academic programs now include a professional skills subject that teaches the types of attributes required in the Australian context. Professional disciplines, such as nursing and engineering, are often more advanced due to a long history of input into curriculum design by established practitioners. Other disciplines can learn a lot from their experience, especially the establishment of professional competencies and authentic assessment in partnership with industry.

International students, who may have limited exposure to the Australian labour market, are likely to benefit considerably from contextualised study of Australian workplace requirements and expectations. Often, professional skills units have been introduced in response to challenges that international students face when embarking on a work placement or seeking graduate employment.

While international students typically have a strong academic focus, educators need to emphasise the importance of creativity, problem solving abilities and innovative mindsets, which are increasingly valued in a wide range of workplaces. This is often best done in partnership with industry.

International students, who may have limited exposure to the Australian labour market, are likely to benefit considerably from contextualised study of Australian workplace requirements and expectations.

Techniques commonly used include bringing in employers and recruiters as guest lecturers, field trips to industry sites, and inviting successful alumni to reflect on their experiences and the value of a holistic approach to employability development. Importantly, the benefits of developing professional competencies alongside discipline-specific knowledge needs to be reinforced to students through their engagement with each aspect of the institution. Fostering collaboration between academic teams involved in course design, careers and employability staff, and industry partners will also promote the integration of employability into the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. This will also assist international students to translate in-classroom lessons into real-world application.

Embedding opportunities for students to engage in self-reflection in group settings can assist with the critical thinking skills, improve their communication skills and enable students to learn from their peers. Academics and professional staff should create structured opportunities for students to think critically about their experiences, reflect and constructively feedback and learn from their peers about the challenges they experienced as well as the skills they successfully developed. This exercise allows program administrators and student participants to close the loop in an engaging way.



## Case Study

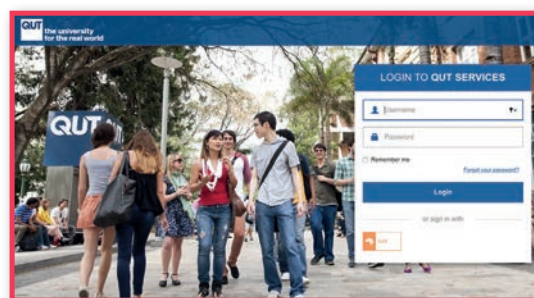
### Embedded Student Employability, Queensland University of Technology

**QUT is embedding employability into both co-curricular student experiences and curriculum, including Work Integrated Learning, using a Career Development Learning (CDL) Framework.**

The framework was developed in partnership with career development practitioners, students, academics, industry, and career development researchers. It builds students' Career Development Learning across four pillars: Career Self-Management; Professional Identify; Social Capital and Connectedness; and Mindsets for Innovation and Enterprise and is a core element of the university's academic plan.

Students develop their employability within the curriculum, aligned with assessments and specific to their industry or discipline. The learning is designed from a whole-of-course perspective so that the required skills, knowledge and mindsets are developed in a scaffolded manner throughout the learning journey, increasing students' readiness and chances of success for transitioning out, to find and create meaningful work.

Supporting and complementing the curriculum are co-curricular initiatives which provide students autonomous opportunities to develop, through online experiential learning modules, online application review, workshops for specific employment-seeking skills and leadership development, peer-based support, one-to-one consultations, connections with industry and career mentoring.



Further information can be found at:  
[www.studentportfolio.qut.edu.au](http://www.studentportfolio.qut.edu.au)



## Case Study

### Beyond Bond, Bond University

'Beyond Bond' is a personal development program specifically designed to foster advanced interpersonal skills and enhance the employability of Bond University graduates.

It is a degree requirement for all undergraduate students which complements and enhances academic learning. It is embedded into the core curriculum but tailored by the Careers and Employment team to meet individual students' needs. It also provides practical, hands-on application of the generic skills covered in Bond's compulsory core subjects and incorporates essential career planning strategies. The program offers a wide range of activity options so that students can tailor Beyond Bond to match their degree, career goals, specific talents and community interests.

Throughout the duration of their degree, students must accrue a minimum of 100 points by undertaking and reflecting on various activities and initiatives endorsed by the Beyond Bond program coordinator. All students must complete the Beyond Bond activities and associated e-portfolio submissions included in the three compulsory Bond core subjects (30 points): Critical Thinking and Communication; Leadership and Team Dynamics; and Ethical Thought and Action.

Students then select from a range of activities, totalling a minimum of 70 points. These electives are categorised as:

- **Work-based** – Internships, part-time employment, service-based learning, elite sports engagement
- **Work-related** – Mooting, BondCo, capstone project, industry-related competitions
- **Community-based** – Volunteering, mentoring / coaching programs, community leadership, global experience
- **Career exploration** – Attending career events, industry engagement, career workshops

For each activity undertaken as part of Beyond Bond, students must write a piece for their Beyond Bond e-portfolio reflecting on the value of the experience and how it has enhanced specific areas of their employability.

In addition to an official Statement of Attainment on the graduate's Academic Transcript and Australian Higher Education Graduate Statement (AHEGS), students benefit from having developed a strategic plan for graduate employment and a comprehensive e-portfolio to show prospective employers. The Beyond Bond activities are specifically chosen to enhance employability and expose students to a wider range of career options.



Further information can be found at:  
[www.bond.edu.au/current-students/opportunities/career-development-centre/beyond-bond](http://www.bond.edu.au/current-students/opportunities/career-development-centre/beyond-bond)



## 4. Provide international students with opportunities to advance their English language competency

English language proficiency and the ability to communicate effectively within a professional context are fundamental competencies required by industry. Clearly, a high level of English proficiency is essential for graduates in the Australian workforce, but this is very likely to be a critical factor for international students' employability also upon return to their home country or another destination. These returned students are likely to be employed in roles in which their international and intercultural skills can be harnessed.

In order to graduate with the communication skills demanded by employers, international students should have opportunities to practice and improve their English language proficiency throughout their student experience. It is critical to develop proficiency in relation to:

- Specific fields of professional practice and workplaces
- Speaking, reading and writing for academic purposes
- Engaging in social and professional networks, and especially to be able to reflect on their experiences and articulate their strengths, passions and aspirations

A major challenge for institutions is how to develop sustainable and integrated whole-of-institution approaches to assure graduates' English language proficiency. Arkoudis et al.'s (2014) English Language Proficiency and Employability Framework advocates a model of distributed responsibilities involving collaboration between staff at each level of the institution (teaching and learning leaders, course coordinators, academics, academic language and learning advisors). The framework provides many examples of initiatives designed to enhance language proficiency in employment contexts.

Such concerted measures are needed because it is possible for international students' language skills to stall while studying in Australia (Lane, 2012). Although living in a predominantly English speaking society, many international students continue to live, study, socialise and work in their native language, both in real life and online. These social comforts are an important way for students to maintain strong and supportive social relationships when faced with homesickness and loneliness, especially in the early stages of their studies.

We should explain to students the importance of seeking out opportunities to develop their English proficiency while broadening their social and professional networks, thereby making the most of studying and living in Australia. Though students should be proactive in finding these opportunities, institutions can assist by providing mechanisms for international students to engage with local students and the broader Australian community.

In order to graduate with the communication skills demanded by employers, international students should have opportunities to practice and improve their English language proficiency throughout their student experience.

## Case Study

### Professional Development Program, University of New South Wales

The UNSW Professional Development Program is a career development learning and workplace experience program designed to assist international students to further develop communication skills, improve confidence, and develop an understanding of the cross-cultural nature of the Australian workplace.

The program involves a 50 hour on campus workplace experience hosted by offices across UNSW. The Program provides international students an excellent sense of community through interacting with UNSW staff and academics, becoming part of a professional network at UNSW, engaging with careers and employment staff, and staying part of this community through strong alumni connections.

The Program has been run 19 times over the last 10 years with 1477 students having participated in the 3-day program and 1084 undertaking workplace experiences. Many students have gone on to gain full time employment with UNSW as a result of their workplace experience.

Over 70 different units on campus have hosted students for their workplace experience. Human Resources, the Department of External Relations, Dean's units and Finance. UNSW staff volunteer to be part of the program and support students throughout their workplace experience, not only by providing feedback and valuable exposure to the workplace, but also by introducing students to colleagues to ensure students can expand their network and feel part of the community.

For example, supervisors are required to help facilitate interviews with students, invite students to meetings and often end up staying in touch with students, or being a referee for future job applications.

All students in the program join the PD Program Alumni LinkedIn Group which provides a platform for students to stay connected with each other and the Careers and Employment staff. Many of these alumni also return to participate in UNSW alumni panels each year to provide insight and inspiration to current international students. These students are therefore very much still part of the UNSW community long after graduation through their participating in the PD Program.



Further information can be found at:  
<https://student.unsw.edu.au/pdp>



## Case Study

### Café Skills Program, ILSC Language Schools

ILSC curriculum specialists designed a four-week Café Skills course to provide students with practical work experience to support them in their search for employment in the hospitality industry, using each campus's state-of-the-art kitchen facilities equipped with professional coffee machines.

Students commence this course once they reach the pre-intermediate level of their English proficiency. During the first week of the course, the students learn theory relevant to the Australian hospitality industry and the various types of coffees served in Australia, including nomenclature, ingredients, and preparation techniques. Once the students are confident in differentiating the different beverages, they move on to practical lessons in the kitchen where their professionally-trained barista teacher demonstrates all the necessary steps in making a coffee: from switching on the coffee machine to setting up, to serving customers, to cleaning up their work station.

In this simulated café environment, students learn more than just how to make coffee. They train to work as a team, to follow instructions, to take orders, to make delicious, frothy cappuccinos as well as how to operate quickly. As well, they learn excellent customer service practices. If students demonstrate all these abilities, they are awarded the ILSC Certificate of Attainment.

This course enables students to more easily transition into the workforce following successful completion. There is usually a waiting list for this popular program, which is a testament to both its effectiveness and the fact that it gives a considerable advantage to international students looking for part-time employment in the Australian hospitality industry.



A link to a video introduction of ILSC's Café Skills program is provided:  
<https://youtu.be/Wx19U6zQbLs>



## 5. Incentivise engagement between international and domestic students to enhance the employability of both student cohorts

A critical challenge facing all institutions is how best to enhance and incentivise interactions between local and international students, both to improve the social integration of international students into their local communities, and to enhance the cultural competencies of both cohorts. International students are often frustrated and disappointed with the lack of interaction with local students (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Leask, 2009, Blackmore et al., 2014), which can manifest as lower satisfaction with their overall experience. The issues are threefold:

First, students often combine work and study, spending minimal time on campus, which limits opportunities for interaction outside the classroom. Many institutions provide opportunities to improve interactions between international and domestic students via initiatives such as transition programs, common foundation subjects in undergraduate degrees, and group work (Arkoudis, 2015). However, more work needs to be done, with programs that develop the intercultural skills of all students likely to enhance overall employability.

Research suggests that students living on campus in purpose-built student accommodation perform better than their peers who live off campus.

Department of Education, 2015

A second issue, discussed earlier in this guide, is international students' tendency to live and socialise with other international students, often from the same cultural and linguistic background. This can constrain development of employability, by limiting their ability to advance their English proficiency; develop important cultural knowledge; understanding the nuances of small talk and making conversation, as well as creating local networks. Research suggests that students living on campus in purpose-built student accommodation perform better than their peers who live off campus (Department of Education, 2015). More purpose-built student accommodation on or near campus may improve the international student experience and provides opportunities to promote interaction between local and international students.

Finally, local students often have established friendship groups and are not motivated to expand their networks to include international students, so institutions need to help local students to better understand the benefits of developing friendships with international students, which include greater intercultural understanding and international networks. The push to expand outbound mobility programs is a welcome development, with participation in outbound mobility linked to improved intercultural competence (Potts & Berquist, 2014). However, encouraging positive relationships between international and domestic students and the broader Australian community will require creative solutions to be sustained over time.





## Case Study

### Univariate Sydney

Univariate Sydney is a four-week inter-university consulting competition designed to enhance students' employability.

A major objective is to simulate workplace diversity and this is achieved by each university having teams with a mix of members from various faculties, postgraduates and undergraduates, and domestic and international students.

Since 2011, over 1,000 students across multiple universities have joined forces with 33 organisations to tackle real world challenges with refreshing approaches. Most recently, this program was run collaboratively between the career services of the UTS, WSU, Wollongong, UNSW, ACU, CQU, Southern Cross, Notre Dame and Macquarie universities.

The universities bring in organisations that have a genuine challenge which student teams can work on. Each company hosts the competing teams for an on-site briefing on their project. Teams then have three weeks to work off-site on the project. In the final week all the teams send a report to their project host which is then followed by a face-to-face presentation. The organisation decides the winning team from their assessment of the report and the presentations.

The program provides students with important career development including critical professional and personal connections. Host organisations benefit from being presented with innovative and creative solutions to business challenges, as well as exposure to potential recruits for their internship and graduate programs. Universities benefit from providing students with key opportunities to improve their employability leading to better graduate outcomes.

International students report increased confidence to connect with domestic students both within their university and at other universities. They value the opportunity to engage with local employers and learn about the Australian workplace. The participating universities anticipate that positive experiences with international students through Univariate will help shift negative or stereotypical attitudes towards international students by local employers.

Univariate Sydney was adapted from the University of Wollongong's Univariate Illawara initiative in 2011, which had in turn been adapted from the Higher Education Work Skills Olympiad, a government funded national competition.



Further information on Univariate can be found on each participating university's website.

## Case Study

### Employability Award, University of Queensland

The UQ Employability Award acknowledges students who have engaged in a range of experiences outside of the taught curriculum, and who are able to recognise and effectively communicate the employability development gained through these experiences.

Students who successfully complete the Award receive a certificate at graduation in recognition of this achievement complementary to their academic studies.

The aim of the UQ Employability Award is to encourage all students to take a whole of degree perspective to planning and engaging in experiences that will enhance their capabilities, and to understand how these experiences have contributed to their employability development.

This whole of degree Award program asks students to engage in and reflect on volunteering, work experience and five other personal or professional development activities and to identify the skills and attribute development that they have gained from these experiences. To achieve the Award, students create an application in their ePortfolio that explains and provides evidence of how these experiences have contributed to their employability development as well as how they anticipate these capabilities and mindsets will benefit them as they embark on their careers. The final stage of the Award is a panel interview where students articulate their employability in a simulated recruitment environment.

At any given time, approximately 10% of the student population are registered for the UQ Employability Award. The Award has proven extremely popular with UQ International students who do not have to secure degree related work experience in order to participate and who benefit from the 'snowball' effect that participation in activities gives to their confidence. International students have also acknowledged that the program not only supported their employability development but also allowed them to make connections with other students, and broadened their career options through their involvement in activities that they might not have otherwise engaged in.



Further information can be found at:  
<https://employability.uq.edu.au/award>



## Case Study

### Business Practicums, University of Sydney

In 2019, in response to concerns over limited WIL opportunities for its postgraduate international students, the University of Sydney Business School introduced a new Business Practicum elective.

Initially, the program focused on international post-graduate business students with little work experience. It has since been extended to involve all pre-experience undergraduate business students, domestic and international. In recognition of its outstanding work for providing innovative and alternative WIL placement opportunities to enhance students' employability for graduate employment, the University of Sydney was awarded first place in 2019 for its QS rankings nationally. Internationally, it was ranked fourth.

The Business Practicums are delivered around the themes of: Problem solving; Employability development for life-long learning and career planning; Complex team-based, industry-linked projects; Real business problems with industry partnerships; Building Networks and contacts; Employer / alumni career connections; and Organisational data analysis and research.

A mixture of university WIL experts, industry and alumni connections as well as external experts co-designs and assists with delivering the program each year. A Work-Integrated Education framework has been used to embed experiential learning techniques as well as considering students' different learning styles alongside a high level of industry connections and feedback, experimentation, linking theory to practice, reflective learning and creativity. Curriculum development is student focused and evidence based, including the integration of students' feedback as well as other partners who have participated in related experiential learning programs at the Business School.

Students are invited to share their 'group-based, industry-linked journey' with our industry partners. This reinforces the key message of developing new ideas, exploring current practice, inventiveness, resilience, agility, design thinking and implementation with costs and budgets, while gaining relevant industry experience. International students and industry partners have found that key deliverables of the program, such as the presentation to clients at the completion of the program, resonates well with future employment opportunities, global citizenship making as well as improving business operations for clients. Additionally, the Business Practicums allow students to evidence their enhanced employability developed through the program's emphasis on LinkedIn profile development and the accrual of digital badges.



Further information on Business Practicums can be found at: <https://sydney.edu.au/business/industry-and-community/industry-partnerships/business-projects.html>



## 6. Provide opportunities for international students to participate in work integrated learning

The link between relevant work experience, enhancing employability, and employment outcomes has led to a greater focus on work integrated education and work integrated learning (WIL) programs. WIL is an umbrella term that refers to a range of practical experiences designed to give students valuable exposure to work-related activities relevant to their course of study, and has long been a key element of many university programs. Universities and industry recognise the validity and value of both the pedagogy and authentic assessment, which responds to changing demands and expectations of employers in relation to work-ready graduates.

The 2014 National WIL Strategy reinforced the commitment by government, industry organisations, and educational providers to work in partnership to create opportunities to participate in WIL, recognising the benefits to students, employers, universities and the economy. The National Strategy for International Education 2025 also highlights explicit government support for WIL (Australian Government 2016), particularly to expand the number of programs to enhance employability.

In 2019, Universities Australia published a report, *Work-Integrated Learning in Universities*, which highlighted not only the importance of these programs, but also the diversity of delivery options. The report provides insights into the experiences of particular student cohorts undertaking WIL, including international students, which can improve the quality and type of WIL opportunities for these students.

The success of WIL depends on the quality of pre-placement preparation, and post-placement reflection, especially for international students.



Importantly, students looking for a return on their investment in higher education increasingly see WIL as a vehicle for accessing work-based experiences to enhance employability (Patrick et al., 2008). These experiences not only respond to the expectations of students and industry, but also meet the key needs of international students to extend their networks, practice work-based English language competencies, and obtain work experience in their host country (Berquist et al. 2019).

The success of WIL depends on the quality of pre-placement preparation, and post-placement reflection, especially for international students. One of the key findings of a major report on WIL in Australia is that “merely providing practice-based experiences for students is insufficient unless those experiences are enriched through preparation, engagement and opportunities to share and reconcile what has been contributed by these experiences” (Patrick et al., 2008). Preparation is vital for international students who are generally less familiar with the Australian job application process and workplace culture and expectations.

Meeting the demand for WIL requires institutions to scale up provision, which relies on a number of factors. First, strong engagement between universities and industry provides the foundation for the development of WIL placements, with relationships developed and fostered at all levels of each institution. Small-to-medium enterprises (SME), not-for-profits (NFP), start ups, and local businesses and community organisations within a near-campus catchment zone of the institution offer significant untapped potential as both hosts for WIL placements and potential graduate employers. After careful evaluation, engaging with private outsource providers of work placements, can be another option, where an institution needs to scale quickly and does not have adequate internal administrative resources. Industry engagement has long been a feature of the Australian VET sector which offers important insights in this regard.

We should not fall into the trap of assuming that a placement is the only option for authentic workplace learning.

Universities also need to lead by example and offer on-campus and near-campus work placement opportunities: while institutions often provide international students with volunteer experience, they can also engage students to help plan, deliver, and evaluate events and other on campus activities.

Finally, institutions will need to think creatively when it comes to providing WIL opportunities to international students. While there is growing demand for WIL among many international students, not all place value in gaining practical experience or are ready to undertake WIL. In particular, the benefits associated with gaining work experience in SMEs, NFPs or other community organisations need to be emphasised to both international students and employers.

We should not fall into the trap of assuming that a placement is the only option for authentic workplace learning. Alternative programs such as projects and on campus simulated work experience can be offered to ensure that every student is provided with an opportunity to enhance their employability. Regardless of the format, location, and type of WIL, it is vital that students are given the opportunity to reflect on their activity, to identify the learning gain and articulate this effectively in different settings. This process of self-reflection will enable them to identify and unlock the value of the WIL experience, building confidence, resilience, and critical thinking that can be leveraged in future.



## Case Study

### Preparation for Professional Practice, Charles Darwin University

International students in Charles Darwin University's (CDU) Master of Business Administration and Master of Professional Accounting programs undertake internships towards the end of their courses.

In response to identified skills gaps, a new unit, Preparation for Professional Practice, was introduced to prepare international students for their impending industry placement and create awareness about Australian work culture and expected work behaviour.

The unit involves a mix of delivery modes to relate content and practice covering Australian work culture, professionalism, career planning, techniques for job interviews, ethical behaviour, written and oral communication, email etiquette, group work, work readiness, and techniques for working with and without guidance.

To keep the unit contemporary and relevant to the changing work environment, expert input is provided in the form of mentoring from academics, as well as business and accounting professionals, consultations with experts including CEOs and CFOs of Northern Territory organisations, guest lecturers from industry stakeholders and concurrent workshops by CDU's careers team for improving CVs and preparation for interviews.

During the program, students complete approximately 300 hours of work placement, sourced by CDU's Asia Pacific College of Business and Law. Placements are sourced from a pool of providers interested in offering opportunities to international students. A standard job search process is followed, and students' CVs are developed, matched and aligned with the relevant placement providers. Students are then shortlisted by employers and interviews conducted, before applicants are selected and placed with suitable Northern Territory organisations.



Further information can be found at:  
<https://www.cdu.edu.au/business-law/professional-practice-program>



## Case Study

### Sydney Airport Welcome Desk, Study NSW

Since its establishment in 2015 by Study NSW, the international student welcome desk at Sydney Airport has provided opportunities for currently enrolled students to engage with newly arrived students.

The desk has been set up in partnership with the NSW international education sector and related stakeholders at the primary gateway for students arriving in the state.

One of its strengths is that the desk is staffed by international students who greet arriving peers, providing them with assistance and information. This innovative approach accomplishes two objectives. First, arriving students are greeted by empathetic peers equipped with up-to-date information that is of most value to them, contributing to positive first impressions. The international students who staff the desk gain valuable work experience as the desk is managed as a WIL program. Students at the desk receive training and ongoing mentoring plus a certificate of acknowledgement from the NSW Minister for Trade.

Student participants have noted that it has improved their communication skills, cultural intelligence, leadership, teamwork, problem-solving skills and initiative. It affords them the opportunity to meet new people, connect with like-minded peers, and give something back to the international student community.



More information: [www.study.sydney/programs/welcome-desk](http://www.study.sydney/programs/welcome-desk)

## Case Study

### International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program, City of Sydney

The award-winning International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program is designed to improve engagement between students, the City of Sydney and the international education sector while assisting international student organisations to deliver community events.

It provides training, mentoring and practical experience to leaders in the international student community, creating opportunities for international students to obtain practical and meaningful professional work experience and to develop networks for improving future employability.

The 2018–20 ambassadors organised and led a range of projects over an 18-month placement, including:

- Cultural tours for newly-arrived international students
- International student networking events
- Engaging in employment and career panels to provide advice and support for international students to find work
- Participating in youth leadership conferences for both local and international student leaders
- Establishing a youth music competition and concert to bring together local and visiting young people

The program assists students to reshape their perception of leadership. Activities are designed to help them develop more effective communication skills, project management skills and community engagement capacity.



More information: <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/community/community-support/international-students/studying-and-working-in-sydney/leadership-ambassador-program>

## Case Study

### Industry Engagement Lessons from the VET Sector, William Angliss Institute

William Angliss Institute specialises in preparing students for employment in the international events, food, tourism and hospitality industries.

With international students comprising more than 60 percent of full-time enrolments at the Melbourne campus, the employability of international graduates is a high priority. In order to maximise employment outcomes, students at William Angliss are provided multiple employment experiences to give them exposure to a wide variety of work environments, geographic locations and customer groups.

**Industry mentoring program** – This pilot program matches students with an industry expert to provide social connectedness and one-on-one support in navigating their transition to full-time employment. The career mentoring program matches industry-related professionals (mentors) with students (mentees). Half of the participants are international students. Its purpose is to support students' formal academic training by providing a link to the profession in a structured and tailored way, and also bring exposure to the practical realities of working in the events, food, hospitality and tourism industries.

**Industry partnerships** – The Institute works closely with industry to address current and emerging training requirements, including skills shortages and low retention rates of skilled employees. Over the last two years, this has included:

- Strengthening of industry partnerships and networks, including building stronger relationships with partner TAFEs
- Consultations with a broad range of industry advisory boards, networks, professional associations and councils both locally and interstate, including hosting industry information sessions at the Institute
- Recruitment campaigns conducted across Australia, offering a broad range of programs and services, including skills analysis and compliance
- Supporting a number of industry and government initiatives to address the shortage of skilled hospitality and food industry workers

The strength of industry partnerships is in part due to the efforts made by staff to support international students to obtain industry placements and employment. Staff at William Angliss are encouraged to 'go the extra mile' to make securing industry placements a priority for all international students as is a vital component of their studies and, importantly, it also assists them to feel socially connected to their new home. The institute develops tailored programs in partnership with leading organisations to enable students to gain paid or volunteer experience. William Angliss capitalises on Melbourne's reputation as a food, wine and major event capital by partnering with the City of Melbourne, State Government of Victoria and others to provide unique employment and training opportunities for international students at high profile events, including the Spring Racing Carnival, Melbourne Fashion Festival and most recently, the International AIDS Conference.



Further information can be found at <https://www.angliss.edu.au/industry/>





## 7. Leverage alumni in Australia and abroad for internships, mentorship and employment opportunities

Former international students who have successfully transitioned into the labour market represent a valuable resource for Australian institutions. Many careers and employability services are building alumni networks as a way of providing current international students with valuable insights into the job seeking process and advice on what to expect in real work cultures. International career advisers suggest that international students are more receptive to advice coming from successful alumni rather than university staff as they can personally relate their considerable skills, knowledge and experiences.

Alumni can also offer valuable support for international students preparing to return home, creating a long-standing relationship beyond the institution itself. Entrepreneurial alumni can also shed light on starting a small business either in Australia or elsewhere, providing support to international students in both countries. Alumni can also offer mentorship, shadowing, work placements, and graduate employment opportunities.

Institutions need to examine ways to cultivate strong and enduring relationships with their alumni. Some strategies for institutions include inviting alumni as guest speakers to career events to share their experiences with current international students, or engaging alumni to participate in events in their home country to speak with parents and prospective students where a more personalised and genuine conversation can assist in recruitment efforts.

Former international students who have successfully transitioned into the labour market represent a valuable resource for Australian institutions.

Allowing graduates to keep their institutional email can keep alumni connected with the institution, facilitating global networking opportunities and enabling the university to draw on the wealth of expertise and international connections of their alumni. This also enables universities to seek and prioritise collaborations with alumni businesses for mentorship, internship, and placement opportunities, as well as engaging young alumni with opportunities

that can enhance their employability and continue to build positive relationships. Although it is unlikely to yield results for early career starters, offering value-add professional development to enhance alumni employability and continue to develop their expertise creates an ongoing reciprocal and supportive relationship that may result in philanthropic donations longer term.

## It's Who You Know, University of Technology Sydney

“It's Who You Know” is an annual event for University of Technology Sydney (UTS) international students to practise their networking skills and to learn from former UTS international students and alumni now working in Sydney.

### Case Study

This event was established as a result of feedback from international students and former international students that wanted an opportunity to learn from the experience of others in transitioning from university after graduation.

A major objective was to enable international students to practise their professional networking skills in an encouraging, safe and fun environment as well as increasing their network. They can also learn from successful alumni who understand the nuances of the international student experiences around job search, job applications and adapting to the Australian workplace culture.

Former international students appreciate the opportunity to give back to the university by sharing their knowledge and experience including strategies on coping with the visa process whilst looking for work.

A pilot was run in August 2018 with 18 former international students and 58 students attending, and the program has been offered each semester since. To cater to students' differing levels of comfort, a short introduction

on networking is held at the beginning of the event before the commencement of structured and unstructured activities. Students can also see profiles of the alumni by country, course and industry to help decide who to approach first in the free mingling part of the event. Throughout the event, the aim is to reframe students' perceptions of networking and to increase their confidence. Post-event feedback continuously helps shape and improve the event for students and alumni.



For more information: <https://careersblog.uts.edu.au/the-story-behind-its-who-you-know/>



## Case Study

### Workplace Insights, The University of Auckland

The Workplace Insights Program forms part of a scaffolded international student employability initiative. It is facilitated by the University of Auckland's Career Development and Employability Services (CDES), in collaboration with the International and Alumni Offices.

The purpose of the programme is to connect international students with alumni. This allows them to gain an understanding of the New Zealand workplace culture whereby they:

- Gain insights regarding the skills and attitudes required
- Identify the capabilities they need to develop and grow
- Build their confidence and industry networks.

There is strong interest in the program, and it has grown considerably from its inception with 50 – 60 alumni who participate each year. Currently in its 5th year, over 420 international students have participated and benefited from this initiative.

At the start of each semester:

- Students apply to CDES for this bespoke programme
- The Alumni Office promotes and manages alumni expressions of interest
- Students engage in preparation workshops to learn how to connect confidently and positively
- Alumni are briefed regarding the purpose of the programme and what is expected of them
- A 'Meet and Greet' event is held to officially open the programme; this is where alumni and students first connect

- After this event the students and alumni organise a coffee catch-up and a workplace tour
- To conclude, a 'Celebration' event is held to reconnect, share experiences and celebrate the programme's success.

As a next step, students are invited to engage in a range of career development activities to further develop their employability and become work ready.



Further Information can be found at:  
<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/study/student-support/career-development-and-employability-services/skills-and-career-opportunities/i-students/workplace-insights-programme-wip.html>





## 8. Partner with employers to improve the employability of international students

Industry engagement is central to enhancing employability and improving employment outcomes, so coordinated efforts to maximise existing relationships and build new links must be a priority at all levels of Australian institutions. This includes leadership in developing and nurturing collaborative partnerships, and in fostering productive relationships with industry at every level of the institution. Academics, staff that support the development and implementation of WIL, and careers and employability services need to be supported and resourced in their efforts to create effective, long term relationships with industry and alumni. Crucially, this also needs to be coordinated so that industry can easily find the right person for their needs, and do not have to navigate labyrinthine structures to achieve their aims.

While many institutions have existing relationships with large firms, there is a lot of potential to develop partnerships with SMEs, NFPs, local businesses, and start-ups. Often these firms do not fit into the institutional recruitment cycle and many are unaware of how best to access graduate talent.

In many cases SMEs, NFPs, local businesses, and start-ups are more likely to consider taking on an international student for a work placement or to hire an international graduate. While larger firms often have policies in place that prevent international graduates from applying (e.g. permanent residency, very high English language proficiency), SMEs, NFPs and start-ups are likely to have greater flexibility in their hiring procedures and can provide broader exposure to business operations than larger companies. Equally, students need to be made aware of the benefits of working with an SME, rather than focussing all their efforts on the large, more well-known brands and companies where competition for limited places is fierce.

While many institutions have existing relationships with large firms, there is a lot of potential to develop partnerships with SMEs, NFPs, local businesses, and start-ups.



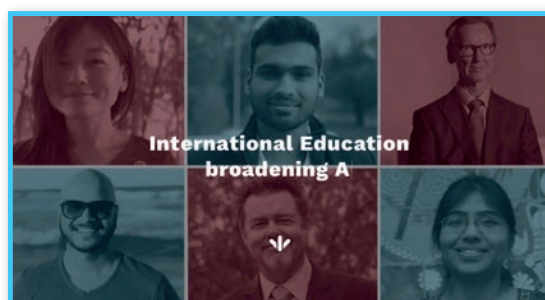
Institutions can encourage business to take on a greater mentoring role. Greater presence of employers on campus and exposure to workplaces will increase international students' understanding of the Australian workplace and expose employers to international students. Institutions realise that international students lack opportunity to develop networks and must adopt creative approaches to providing international students with greater exposure to opportunities on and off campus.

## Shifting perceptions

Institutions also need to work with employers in order to shift the view of international students as being in deficit of specific skills or attributes. While employers may have concerns about hiring an international graduate, the experience of those employers who have employed international graduates is often very favourable. Perceived weaknesses, such as limited fluency in English, are often flipped into strengths, such as the ability to communicate effectively in other languages with a whole new segment of customers.

Employers need to consider unconscious bias that may be embedded in recruitment practices that prioritise 'fitting in' with the cultural norm at the expense of talent from a diverse range of backgrounds.

The increase in intercultural competencies of the wider staff population that results from working with international colleagues should also not be underestimated. There are indications that employers are failing to recognise the benefits of cultural diversity, address biases and stereotypes and leverage the skills and knowledge of staff from diverse backgrounds (Blackmore et al, 2014). Employers need to consider unconscious bias that may be embedded in recruitment practices that prioritise 'fitting in' with the cultural norm at the expense of talent from a diverse range of backgrounds. Students may have high levels of English proficiency but find it difficult to socialise with local colleagues due to a lack of knowledge about national sports and contemporary topics. Education institutions can work with employers to showcase student talents; demystify their concerns around visa requirements, including post study work visas; and highlight the benefits of hiring an international graduate.



See **Broadening our Horizons** (<https://broadenourhorizons.com.au>) for an online resource for institutions to use when engaging with industry.

## Case Study

### International Student Business Charter and #NSWGlobalConnections campaign, Study NSW

Study NSW launched the NSW International Student Business Charter in May 2019, with 12 inaugural industry partners demonstrating their commitment to engaging international students in their workplaces by signing the charter, including Accor Hotels, Allianz, Brookfarm, CricketNSW, UnionPay and Urbanest, amongst others.

Case studies with engaging video content were developed for each signatory to share insights from both an international student and employer perspective. These videos were rolled out in a six-month digital campaign and profiled the mutually beneficial relationships that international students and these organisations have formed through workplace engagement. Study NSW worked closely with project partners and industry networks to amplify campaign content.

The campaign was complemented by a series of face-to-face employability workshops delivered by Outcome.Life at the Sydney Startup Hub. Study NSW also engaged Navitas Professional to deliver employability webinars across NSW. In addition, Study NSW collated a suite of resources to educate, empower and encourage employers to engage international students in their workplace.

Study NSW will continue its work with partner institutions to identify businesses in New South Wales to sign the charter and to demonstrate commitment to engage international students in meaningful opportunities during and after their studies.



More information: <https://www.study.sydney/programs/nswglobalconnections>

## Case Study

### Global Trade Accelerator, New South Wales Government and Practera

In 2019 the NSW Government and the Export Council of Australia supported a pilot program led by Practera, that matches international students in NSW with NSW-based exporters to complete market research projects for foreign markets with export potential.

The inaugural cohort of the Global Trade Accelerator Program comprised students from across UNSW, UTS and WSU universities.

Across the two initial cohorts, 250 students were split into 46 teams and matched with 31 unique exporters and trade professionals to undertake a project learning experience focused on international market research. Through this program, students enhance their development and application of skills in structured business analysis and report-writing as well as virtual teamwork. The Global Trade Accelerator also helps students develop an understanding of skills in experiential learning, including seeking, giving and receiving feedback and engaging in critical self-reflection.

Practera's experiential learning platform includes structured and curated content to support students through the learning journey, allowing the program to be designed as a virtual projects model that can be delivered at scale.



More information: <https://www.study.sydney/news-and-stories/news/study-nsw-partner-program-gives-valuable-insights-to-exporters>



## Case Study

### Impact Challenge, University of Birmingham

The Impact Challenge is a one-week work experience opportunity for undergraduate students. The program involves 48 students working in small multi-year/multi-discipline groups on business challenges set by local small and medium-sized enterprises.

At the end of the week each group presents their recommendations to their employer partner in front of the other students and employers.

The program aims to support students in three ways:

- Providing practical and flexible work experience opportunities that acknowledge widening participation and students' personal circumstances
- Developing key employability and entrepreneurial skills and attributes that support their career development
- Providing a better understanding and first-hand experience of how local small and medium-sized enterprises operate and the employment opportunities they offer

Training is provided in project management, commercial awareness, decision making, teamwork and effective presentations. Students are also supported in building their professional networks and developing/enhancing their LinkedIn profiles. Careers service colleagues and peer mentors support each group to guide them through their project brief, offer suggestions and act as a professional sounding board.

The program is campus-based but does include physical and virtual visits to the employer and each student receives a £100.00 stipend to help cover expenses.



Further information can be found at:  
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/employability/careers/a2c/impact-challenge.aspx>

## 9. Ensure international students understand the range of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in Australia

Many international students have unrealistic expectations of what it takes to secure work in their field after graduating. International students must be properly informed of the steps required to gain experience or employment. This will enable them to take responsibility for identifying and acting on opportunities and work toward enhancing their employability to achieve their career goals. Institutions should be careful not to over-promise on employment opportunities in marketing materials. Rather, they must provide prospective students (and their families) with realistic information regarding work experience opportunities and employment prospects in Australia.

It is critical to inform students early of the importance of developing their employability throughout the student experience in a variety of ways, and emphasising how institutions can support students to effectively articulate their value proposition – their knowledge, capabilities, mindset, and experience – to prospective employers.

International students need to be encouraged to think outside the box. A narrow focus on a small number of high-status companies may prevent some international graduates from pursuing opportunities with smaller firms that offer excellent experiential learning opportunities. Institutions can also provide opportunities for international students to develop entrepreneurial mindsets and knowledge of start-ups. Most universities now have start-up programs and incubators designed to promote entrepreneurialism.

As the nature of work is changing, many students recognise the need to develop and demonstrate an entrepreneurial mindset – creativity, problem solving, resilience – whether or not they intend to start their own businesses.

Entrepreneurial behaviours, attributes, and competencies are a core part of employability, and entrepreneurial education needs to be embedded into the curriculum if these ways of thinking, being, and doing are to meet the constantly evolving world of work.

It is critical to inform students early of the importance of developing their employability throughout the student experience in a variety of ways.

International students should be encouraged to set realistic, achievable, incremental career goals which can be reviewed over time. Institutions could do more to promote alternate pathways, engage more with smaller companies and ensure that students are exposed to a wide range of employment options, including those in outer-suburban and regional areas. The recent government push to focus on improving the attractiveness of rural and regional areas should open up opportunities and expectations for employability activities and WIL to support international students.

Importantly, resilience is critical to the job seeking process. Navigating the graduate employment landscape in a foreign country can be both stressful and demoralising if students struggle to find work. International students should be encouraged to access counselling services at their institution if they need support in managing stress and recovering from adversity. Stronger resilience enables students and graduates to adapt to challenging labour market conditions, including unemployment, under-employment, disappointment and rejection.



## Case Study

### Meltwater News

Meltwater News is an international media monitoring company founded by two Norwegians in 2001, which now employs more than 2000 people and has more than 30,000 clients internationally.

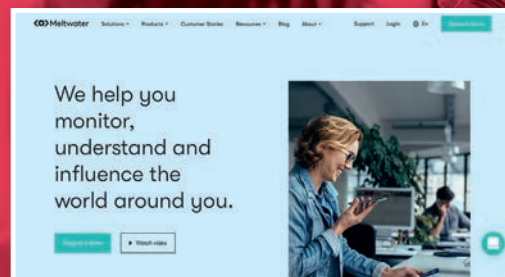
The company has around 60 offices in 30+ countries and a policy of not having more than 15 people employed in any one office in order to preserve the company's entrepreneurial, start-up culture. If an office reaches more than 15 staff then talent is exported to start up a new office elsewhere. One of the key challenges facing Meltwater is recruiting staff with the right skill set needed to expand the business worldwide.

The company frequently employs graduates because of their 'spark' and their 'willingness to prove themselves'. The average age of employees in the company worldwide is 27 years. A bachelor degree is a minimum requirement although Meltwater is not concerned by the discipline. For example, current Melbourne office staff have degrees in biotechnology, history and dentistry. The company looks for six key attributes when hiring graduates: personality and humour; communication skills; drive and stamina; team players; management potential and intelligence.

The recruitment process involves sifting through job applications, calling applicants and inviting them to a 'mingle session' which closely resembles a cocktail party. The aim being to inform the applicant about the company and the industry and then to gauge how effective the applicant is socially and how they get on with other employees.

After the initial introduction to the company, applicants are invited to a group interview where they are asked to talk about themselves and then required to participate in a group activity to determine their capacity to work with others and to test their entrepreneurial abilities. These activities also reveal something about the candidate's personality and whether they have the 'X factor'.

According to Meltwater, one of the advantages of hiring international graduates is that because they often have fewer opportunities than local graduates, they give 100 per cent and are less likely to quit if they confront challenges. Knowledge of language and culture in key markets is another advantage. In recent years, Meltwater has sponsored international graduates for positions in their Melbourne office.



Further information about Meltwater can be found at: <https://www.meltwater.com/au/about/>

## Case Study

### EMPLOY101x MOOC, The University of Queensland

For several years The University of Queensland (UQ) has been focused on ensuring that students understand employability and helping them to develop the capabilities and mindsets to succeed in the workforce. In 2016, UQ launched the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) EMPLOY101x - Unlocking your Employability to assist all students to understand this concept and to provide them with the techniques to enable them to learn from their experiences across their university journey.

EMPLOY101x is a self-paced, 7 module course based on the UQ Employability Framework, with contributions from students, graduates, industry and higher education and employability experts around the world. In the course, learners are taught how all experiences (both within and outside the curriculum) have the potential to develop employability, and are provided with a structured process of self-reflection to unpack these learning opportunities and identify the development that has occurred. Learners also explore the graduate recruitment process, including how to effectively communicate their employability to an employer, how to make the most of work experience and placements, and transitioning into the workforce.

The course encourages international students to consider a range of experiences that could further develop their employability, rather than focussing on traditional work-based experiences that are often more difficult for international students.

Since its launch, EMPLOY101x has had over 53,000 enrolled learners across 192 countries, attesting to its relevance and the applicability of the UQ Employability Framework to different geographical and cultural environments. The associated resources are available to UQ staff to enable them to integrate employability learning in degree courses and extracurricular activities.



The course can be accessed at:  
<https://bel.uq.edu.au/careers/explore/edx>

## Case Study

### Using Virtual Reality to Build Interview Skills, Murdoch University

The Murdoch Business School utilises digital simulation technology to better prepare students for one of the most challenging aspects of pre-employment – the job interview.

Many graduate recruiters are now relying on some type of digital interview interface to select applicants, and a lack of practice within this virtual world can put graduates at a disadvantage.

In 2019, the Murdoch Business School, together with the School of Education and People and Culture Office, were awarded a Vice Chancellor's Small Steps Innovation grant to test whether using SimLab technology could improve perceptions of interview readiness for international students.

The SimLab facility uses the human in the loop interactor to control avatars to provide an authentic learning and practice environment. SimLab provides a controlled non-threatening space that can be customised to recreate the most demanding interpersonal challenges that individuals confront every day, including attending an interview for a professional job.

Participants in a pilot initially felt uncertain about their interactions with the avatar, even describing the experience as a little creepy. However, all of those who participated reported that they felt more confident, less worried, and more prepared for an interview.

The SimLab enables individuals to practice, rehearse and reflect on their interview techniques, which are particularly valuable for international students who may be less familiar with Australian interview conventions. It is now available to all business students at Murdoch University seeking to develop capabilities that enhance employability and interview skills.



Further information can be found at:  
<https://www.murdoch.edu.au/pages/simlab>  
Using Virtual Reality to Build Interview Skills,  
Murdoch University





## 10. Prepare international students for the transition into the home country labour market

While many international students come to Australia hoping to remain temporarily or permanently after graduation, a majority of graduates will return home after completion of their studies or move on to a third country. For many international students, returning home poses many challenges as they grapple with reverse culture shock, competition for graduate jobs and the weight of family expectations. Having invested considerably in their overseas study experience, many international students return home with expectations around job type and salary that may not be met. The graduate labour market in key source countries such as China and India is highly competitive and returning graduates are competing with a growing pool of well-qualified local graduates who have the benefits of local knowledge and networks. Many returning international graduates struggle with this transition.

Many 'return home' programs at Australian institutions provide guidance on how to articulate and promote their overseas study experience to employers in their home country. They encourage students to maintain personal and professional connections in their home country while in Australia and join alumni groups when they graduate. Encouragement is also provided in the use of social media such as LinkedIn or its Chinese equivalent Dajie to help students remain connected and establish new professional links while studying.

Having invested considerably in their overseas study experience, many international students return home with expectations around job type and salary that may not be met.



These programs also provide country specific labour market information especially for returning students, and show students how to articulate their potential to employers in their home country. Some institutions have appointed an International Careers Consultant whose core work involves travelling to key student source countries in Asia to develop and foster relationships with potential employers. Their goal is to expand employment and work experience opportunities for international graduates returning home.

The best programs provide career planning guidance from early on in the student journey, helping students to understand, demonstrate, and articulate how their experience studying in Australia has developed their capabilities and enhanced their employability. Well constructed programs also assist students to clarify their hopes and aspirations and set actions to achieve these goals.

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## Case Study

### Singapore Infocomm and Media Development Authority Internship Scheme, Austrade

Austrade's promotion of Australian education around the world includes supporting graduate employability, both in Australia and in students' home countries.

In Singapore, Austrade works with the principal government agency concerned with digital industries, the Infocomm and Media Development Authority (IMDA), which works to create a dynamic and exciting sector filled with opportunities for growth, through an emphasis on talent, research, innovation and enterprise.

Austrade works with IMDA to connect Singaporean students studying in Australian universities with IMDA internships and graduate-employment opportunities in Singapore. IMDA also runs Singapore's [TechSkills Accelerator](#), which offers a suite of programmes to help graduates and professionals upgrade and acquire new skills, to stay competitive and meet the challenges of a fast-moving digital economy.

Austrade works with IMDA to attract talent in areas identified by the Singapore government as strategically important. To support the recruitment of skilled graduates, IMDA runs events in Sydney and Melbourne for Singapore students in Australia that intend to return to Singapore.



Further information on the Singapore IMDA talent and manpower initiatives can be found at: <https://www.imda.gov.sg/for-industry/talent-and-manpower>

## Case Study

### Re-entry Workshop, American University

American University, located in Washington DC, developed a re-entry program which aims to ease the transition for international students returning home, responding to students' concerns about finding jobs back home and cultural readjustment after long absences.

The half-day workshop features a range of speakers and activities aimed at preparing students for any obstacles they might face when returning home. Topics covered include:

- The strengths of a global hybrid identity
- How to market yourself globally
- Ways to cope with challenges of re-entry
- List of resources for effective networking for job market back home

The workshop draws on expertise from across the university including the Career Centre, Counselling Centre, School of International Affairs professors and international alumni who had personal experiences of returning home.



Further information can be found at: <https://www.american.edu/ocl/issr/transitioning-beyond-au-reentry.cfm>

## Case Study

### GW4 Careers and Employment Service Partnership, Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter universities

The GW4 Alliance brings together four of the most research-intensive and innovative universities in the UK: Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter.

The Careers and Employability Services (CES) of the four universities work closely together on a number of projects of common interest to pool resources and promote the exchange of good practice. The CES collaboration began in 2015 with the launch of the first GW4 China Career Fair in China.

The strategic drivers and business rationale for the partnership include:

- Improved access to China and Hong Kong employers for our students and graduates
- Reduced gaps in services between international and UK students
- Focus on the largest international cohort of our students
- Sharing of partner resources, contacts and increasing attraction to employers
- Responding to increasing active demand from our alumni groups
- Building of stronger employer relationships and increase labour market knowledge
- Strengthening of the GW4 CES collaboration

Following the initial career fair in Shanghai, the model was extended to Shenzhen, bordering the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The two locations provide access to very different recruiters and help to broaden the exposure of the GW4 partners to a wider range of sectors and job opportunities for our students and graduates. While Shanghai is home to banking, finance and consultancy firms, Shenzhen is home to a diverse range of tech and State-Owned Enterprises and is easily accessible to Hong Kong employers.

The organisation of the events draws on the support from the universities' alumni groups and local business partners.

In the wake of COVID-19, the partnership is now delivering a wide range of employer-led webinars, which are likely to be maintained once the delivery of fairs resume in China. The GW4 Alliance plans to extend the model to other territories in the near future.



Further information can be found at:  
<https://gw4.ac.uk/>



Covid-19 will bring a more challenging employment landscape, with the need for innovation, creativity, and growth mindsets even more necessary. Leveraging promising practice from on and offshore institutions, and implementing focused initiatives like those featured in this guide, will enable our sector to face the new normal with informed perspectives. It is unlikely that we will return to the way things were, so let us consider how we can be better.



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